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Alien Curb Passes

By Pat McElroy
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Alien firms will not be able to own land here under a bill passed 18-2 by senators yesterday, but one senator promised a court fight if the measure becomes law.

Sen. Allen Sekt argued that any law that does not guarantee equal protection under the law is "unconstitutional." He said after the vote, he will take it to court if Gov. Camacho does not veto it, or if an override of a veto succeeds.

The bill would exclude alien ownership by way of corporation, as is the case on Guam now, partnership, firm, association, or "other collective organization" where "49 per cent or more of whose stock, capital or other equity is owned by aliens."

Those voting for the measure included Sens. Paul Calvo and Tony Palomo, GOP gubernatorial candidates challenging Camacho. The negative votes were registered by Sekt and Sen. Al Ysrael who argued during floor debate Monday that the aliens were not the ones to blame for high land prices, "but the local owners who sell the land at a high price."

The main supporter of the bill, Sen. Paul Bordallo, argued that the bill would mean more control over the island's future development. He earlier argued that the bill would be a policy which could be amended to allow certain investors here who had products and services that Guam needed.

Sekt said the bill "would only make the rich, richer and the poor, poorer" since without alien investors, land prices would be drastically depressed, allowing those with money to buy more property here.

Sekt later said the bill would jeopardize plans for large housing developments here, since most of the projects are funded by aliens. Another bill discussed, but placed back in committee, was the bill to allow slot machines and other gaming devices to be transported here, thus aiding local pinball and slot machines operators in their fight with the federal authorities who have seized machines here.

The gaming machines violate a U.S. law. The law prohibits the transportation of gambling devices in interstate and foreign commerce. The bill would exempt Guam from the provisions of that federal law.

Veteran Democrat Sen. George Bamba attempted to get the measure passed yesterday, but Sen. Joe Ada, a Republican introduced a lengthy amendment that would legalize the machines here and control the payout. The bill was given to the Special Legislative Committee on Sports Wagering and Gambling for further study.